



To: Promotion Merit Committee
From: Gary Huey, Professor, Advisor for the History BA
Date: December 2, 2014
Re: Merit Increase for Prof. Barry Mehler

Dear Committee Members:

Barry Mehler asked me to write a letter supporting his application for a merit increase, and I do so gladly. I have known Prof. Mehler since 1988 when he was hired as an adjunct. I served on the committee and hired him as a tenure track professor and I have never regretted the decision. I served as his tenure committee chair as colleague for the last twenty-six years. From this perspective I believe I can judge his credentials for this merit increase.

Let me first address his teaching. Barry is trying a very different approach to his teaching. His emphasis is on provoking thinking in his students. The methods he employs may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I know from talking to students that those who "get it," and most do by the end of the semester, enjoyed the experience and they do learn to think. When I have students in my classes who have taken Prof. Mehler's class, I can always count on them being very active participants for me and willing to challenge interpretations in the text and all of our additional readings and what I say as well. They provide an excellent example for the rest of the class. These were informed opinions and not just nonsensical ideas. This something we all strive for in our studnets, I got to practice firsthand Barry's methods. In the spring of 2011 I substituted for several weeks in two of his classes when he was out due to surgery. I enjoyed the experience but not quite brave enough to try it in my classes.

I have also worked with Dr. Mehler on a Department of Education grant that gave us the opportunity to go to Alpena to give workshops on history teaching methods to K-12 teachers. We did this for over a year and the teachers received Barry's ideas with enthusiasm. He gave them a mixture of his methods he used in "the show" and very imaginative but more traditional methods. It was a wonderful and enriching experience for all involved.

He has been a very active scholar. You can read his statement and vita to see the long list of his contributions in this area. He is sought out for book reviews and articles. He does not have to look for someone to publish his research; they come to him. He has brought scholars to Ferris to inform the campus community on a variety issues. For example, the history honor society is sponsoring the regional Phi Alpha Theta conference this spring and through his contacts he has secured our keynote speaker. He is involved constantly in research on a several topics. All this, despite a heavy teaching load and

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
1009 Campus Drive, Big Rapids, MI 49307-2280
Phone 231 591-3675

extensive service commitments, probably much like so many of our faculty. What makes this different is that Barry is at an age when most people begin to slow down and rest on what they have done. He is actually doing more and this is not typical.

You can see this in his service as well. He is active in service to the department as you can see from his vita. His participation with our Phi Alpha Theta chapter has been crucial to our success. Membership has grown and we are hosting the regional conference in two of the last three years, which no one has done in quite some time. Dr. Mehler has played a key role in this growth. When it came time do our Academic Program Review report, he did his share of the work and did it well. This is a burdensome task but we always do well because our faculty step up and do what is necessary. He also served on the University's Historical Task Force and helped plan the 125th Anniversary celebration. Barry has been our representative at the Michigan History Day competition as judge for the past ten years. His presence at this event not only helps the young scholars who are making presentations, but he also acts as a positive face for Ferris and our history program.

His work with the community is the best of the six members of the history faculty. His most prominent contribution is with the Big Rapids Historical Preservation Committee. He has shared his expertise with the community on numerous occasions from the local health food store to discussion on the meaning of life. He is committed to his students, the university, and the community. I believe he has earned this merit award based on years of dedicated service. I give him my highest recommendation.